

been filled up so far is likely to hit the chances of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes candidates because most of the vacancies that lie unfilled are those reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes; and

(b) if so, the reaction of Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR) : (a) The information on total number of posts/vacancies reserved for the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes in various Ministries/Departments is not centrally maintained. However, according to the information available, the 'backlog' of vacancies in respect of SCs was 5171 and that in respect of STs was 6662. Of this, recruitment had been made in 1254 SC vacancies and 853 ST vacancies.

(b) The Government has constituted an Empowered Committee of Secretaries to process the recommendations of the Pay Commission. Appropriate decisions would be arrived at, keeping in view, inter-alia, the policy on reservation of posts for SCs and STs.

Electoral Rolls

1108. SHRIMATI JAYAWANTI NAVEENCHANDRA MEHTA : Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to review its policy of revising electoral rolls every alternate year; and

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LEGAL AFFAIRS, LEGISLATIVE DEPARTMENT AND DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP) : (a) and (b) The Election Commission has informed that it is reviewing its existing policy introduced in 1993 of intensive revision of electoral rolls every alternate year, as the experience gained by it has shown that increasing the frequency and reducing the interval for intensive revision do not achieve the purpose of having more accurate and up-to-date rolls.

Smuggling of Narcotics

1109. SHRI KESHAB MAHANTA : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) the number of persons arrested and convicted for smuggling of Narcotics in the North-Eastern States during each of the last three years; and

(b) the action taken by the Government against the guilty persons?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR) : (a) As per information available, details of number of persons arrested and convicted for smuggling of narcotics in

North-Eastern States during the last three years are given below :-

Year	No. of Persons	
	Arrested	Convicted
1994	1420	3
1995	611	3
1996 (Prov.)	427	12

(b) Action against the offenders is initiated in accordance with the provisions of NDPS Act, 1985.

[Translation]

Agro based Industries

1110. SHRI PANKAJ CHOWDHARY : Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have any plan for expansion of the agro-based industries in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the time by which the plan is likely to be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN) : (a) to (c) Agro-based industries are being promoted by the KVIC which has taken various steps to develop them. The KVIC provides financial assistance by way of grant and loans to its registered Institutions, Cooperative Societies, State KVBs and individual entrepreneurs on the basis of viable Projects submitted by them. KVIC also provides technical assistance, makes arrangements for supply of improved tools and implements and assists in training and marketing of the products produced by the rural artisans. The major Agro-based activities promoted by the KVIC are bee-keeping, ghani oil, honey, cane gur and khandsari, palm gur, processing of cereals and pulses, fruits and vegetables, fibres, forest plants and fruits for medicinal purposes, etc. KVIC has also launched a National Programme on bee-keeping to boost the production of honey and to provide gainful employment to rural artisans. The development of agro-based industries under the purview of KVIC is a continuous process.

Increase in Prices of Vehicles

1111. SHRIMATI BHAVNABEN DEVRAJ BHAI CHIKHALIA : Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether automobile manufacturing companies are consistently increasing the prices of their vehicles inspite of the relaxation in excise duty by the Government;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps taken by the Government in this regard?